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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXXI

MARCH, 1908

NUMBER 3

Editorial

SOME PROBLEMS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

RECENT UTTERANCES ON THE SUBJECT

The Bethesda pool of theological education has been stirred several times in the last year. First came Dr. Berle's article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, declaring that the theological seminaries are producing inefficient and incompetents, and are adapted possibly to produce another generation of theological teachers, like the present one, ignorant of its task, but are certainly not sending out men able to do the work of the Christian pastorate. In a far different tone and spirit Professor Dickey discussed, "The Position of Greek in the Theological Education of Today," in an address delivered on the occasion of his inauguration as professor of New Testament Exegesis in the McCormick Theological Seminary. Professor Bosworth published in *Religious Education* for October a thoughtful and thought-provoking study of several of the problems of the theological school, arguing in particular for a lengthening of the theological curriculum. A little later the theological school, hitherto associated with Baylor University, sought release from this relationship on the express ground among others that the investigative atmosphere of a college is unfavorable to the best development of a theological school, and for the purpose of building up a school which should take a student with any measure whatever of previous training and give him all the education, theological and non-theological, that he needs to prepare him for the ministry. The opinion is expressed by those who favor the change that only one in ten of the students of the new school will have had a college course. Still later the Newton Theological Institution has taken over as a part of its work a training school for Christian workers

in Boston, intending, however, as we understand, to continue the work of the two schools in large part independently and at a distance from one another.

Here is a bundle of problems: Are the theological schools working on wholly wrong lines? Shall Greek and Hebrew be required as prerequisite to or as a part of the theological curriculum, or shall they be made elective? Shall there be any admission requirements to the theological seminary? Shall the theological school lengthen its curriculum? What is the educational gamut, so to speak, of the theological school? Is the investigative spirit out of place in a theological seminary?

Dr. Berle's intemperate statement will convince but few, and the work which is being accomplished in the practical work of the ministry by the men who have graduated from the seminaries sufficiently refutes it. But men themselves engaged in theological education should be the last to resent any demand, however strenuous, that the output of the seminaries stand the test of practical efficiency. How can such efficiency be secured? We venture to reaffirm three or four propositions.

THE LENGTHENING OF THE COURSE

First, there never was a time when the church needed a more thoroughly educated ministry than is demanded today. Professor Bosworth is right. A college curriculum of four years followed by a theological course of four years, with possible provision for a year's overlapping, i. e., for making the first year of the theological school count as the fourth year of college, is none too long to prepare a man to fill the places of responsibility in the ministry today. It would be a step in the right direction if the leading seminaries of the country would agree to give their diploma or degree of B. D. only after four years of theological study. But the very reasons that demand a four-year curriculum demand also that it shall not be a curriculum of seclusion and reading of books. There must be an appreciable element of practical service under guidance, that the graduate may emerge from the school not into a world which he has seen only through the eyes of book writers or classroom lectures, but into one with which he already has a measure of practical acquaintance.

HEBREW AND GREEK IN THE SEMINARY

Second, it may be inexpedient to require both Hebrew and Greek as a condition of graduation, and it is certainly vain to expect that any appreciable number of students will come to the seminary with Hebrew or that they will all come even with Greek. Yet every encouragement ought to be offered to students to study these languages in the seminary. The diminishing proportion of students who take Greek in college, the increasing pressure of scientific, historical, and sociological studies on the college student, make it practically necessary to provide elementary courses both in Greek and in Hebrew in the seminary. And here we feel obliged to dissent from the course adopted in some even of the best schools in preparing students for interpretation of the New Testament by a beginner's course in Greek using the New Testament only. It has been demonstrated that a mature student can in a daily course of a year or even six months cover the ground in the elements of the Greek language and Xenophon's *Anabasis* ordinarily covered in two years in the preparatory school. Such a course is a much better preparation for the study of the New Testament in Greek than a course dealing with New Testament Greek only. Any loss in vocabulary is more than compensated for by the sense of access to classic authors, dictionaries, grammars, etc., thus acquired, and the open door thus afforded into Greek literature so necessary in any thorough study of the New Testament. It must be remembered that the student who after acquiring a B. S. degree takes up the study of Greek as an adjunct to a theological course may quite outstrip his fellow-students who took Greek in college, even in the field of exact and broad exegesis, and it is inexpedient to hamper and restrict him by teaching him the elements of Greek on the basis of the Gospel of John.

THE TRAINING OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MINISTERS

Third, The New England seminary and the Texas school are right in recognizing the need of theological training schools to prepare for effective religious work men and women who cannot take a college course. Doubtless many men so trained will become pastors of churches and as such do efficient work, though not usually in the places of greatest responsibility. But we judge that the New England school is right in holding that while both classes of work may be carried on

under the direction of the same board of trustees, the two groups of students cannot profitably be trained in the same classes; it has not usually been found expedient to carry on the two kinds of work in the same buildings. Such juxtaposition almost inevitably tends to the lowering of scholarly standards for the men of better education without compensating advantage to the less educated men. Perhaps the Texas school is right in thinking that a theological school with practically no conditions of admission will not thrive well in close connection with a college. We are sure it had better not be put in close relation with a graduate theological school.

FOUR GRADES OF SCHOOLS

The truth seems to be that there are needed for the education of men for the Christian ministry today schools of four different grades: first, an ungraded school for Christian workers, open to men and women of mature years who have had little educational opportunities, but are of good character and ability; second, a college of theology, receiving students who have had a high-school education and giving them a four-years' course partly theological, partly literary and scientific; third, a school for college graduates, having a four-years' curriculum combining scholarly classroom work and practice in the field, and fitting men for the practical work of the pastorate; and fourth, a school, or a department of a school, offering to the stronger and more scholarly men in the preceding school opportunity for a fifth or even a sixth year of theological study and for the acquisition of the investigative spirit and of genuine skill in investigation. From this last school there may come some who will be "mere scholars" and some who will fill professors' chairs rather than pulpits. But there will come also strong men for the most responsible positions in the church, leaders in thought and action. It is no time for lowering standards, but for raising them, while at the same time the broadest opportunity should be given to men of little scholarly ability to acquire that training which will fit them for the work to which they are adapted.